



STATEMENT

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SECRETARY SCHAFFER CALLS ON BEEF INDUSTRY TO VOLUNTARILY ADHERE TO NON-AMBULATORY CATTLE BAN WHILE FINAL RULE IS BEING PROCESSED

WASHINGTON, DC - June 25, 2008

"We thank the Humane Society of the United States for bringing a video to our attention that showed another occurrence of inhumane handling at a stockyard.

Although this is an unfortunate situation and we deplore this type of behavior, it is evident that these cattle were too weak to rise and walk on their own, and would not have been accepted upon delivery to a slaughterhouse. Furthermore, they would not have passed ante-mortem inspection by the highly trained FSIS inspection program personnel. Simply put, the condition of these cattle would prohibit them from even entering the first phase of a multi-phased process of approving cattle for slaughter.

On May 20th, I announced a proposed rule to initiate a complete ban on the slaughter of non-ambulatory cattle that go down after initial inspection. Of the nearly 34 million cattle that were slaughtered last year, under 1,000 cattle that were re-inspected were actually approved by the veterinarian for slaughter. This represents less than 0.003 percent of cattle slaughtered annually. However, to eliminate further misunderstanding of the rule and, ultimately, to make a positive impact on the humane handling of cattle, it is sound policy to simplify this matter by initiating a complete ban on the slaughter of downer cattle that go down after initial inspection.

I have asked the cattle and beef packing industry to voluntarily abide by this ban, which many are already doing, while the proposed rule is going through its final phases of approval and implementation.

I look forward to continuing USDA's work with both the Humane Society and the livestock industry on addressing inhumane handling of animals, and I again thank them for their efforts."

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